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ABSTRACT

This report on the status of European cable television and videography reviews the results of the 1975 colloquy and recommends policy for experimental research, management, and distribution of these formats for the European community. Pluralistic management, technical reporting, and distribution linkage systems within the community are discussed, while general trends in cable television and current experimentation are reviewed. Appendices list participants, experiments conducted, and the format for the colloquy. (RAO)

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Colloquy on the socio-cultural aspects of cable, television and video

(Paris 22-24 October 1975)

REPORT

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FOREWORD

This report consists of two parts. The first is a commentary by the Project Director, Mr Robert Wangermée, Director General of Belgian radio and television (French broadcasts), on the results of the meeting and the guidelines they provide for future action. The second is a summary by the Secretariat of the main points covered by the discussions. It deals with three subjects: videography, cable television and suggestions for follow-up studies.

PART I

THE PRESENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

A. GENERAL TREND

1. The Paris meeting was particularly interesting because of the presence of a number of video and cable TV "practitioners".

By contributing their practical experience derived from work in the field, they considerably enhanced the discussions.

There can be no doubt that a realistic evaluation of the new techniques will be possible only with the help of those using them. That is why it is desirable that in future those responsible for the "Communication" project should more frequently seek the co-operation of the organisers of certain experiments.

2. Studies so far carried out have provided information which makes it possible to recommend guidelines for future action.

It should be noted however that the two techniques have reached different stages of development: video - a "light" technique free from many of the constraints to which cable TV is subject - is undoubtedly more highly developed.

- Accordingly it was possible to go further in the discussions on video and propose forthwith a practical organisational structure to satisfy the needs of the largest number of potential users. This proposal took the form of a recommendation which the experts meeting in Paris unanimously felt should be made through the Council of Europe to the competent authorities in the various countries.

  In some countries, the type of structure proposed is already emerging. Close attention should be paid to its operation in future in order to assess its results.

- In the case of cable television it is too soon to talk about organisational arrangements.

  In a number of countries official committees are investigating and discussing the matter and their conclusions should be awaited. Accordingly it was decided to confine activities for the time being to the assembly of information on the development of cable television. This will make it possible to identify converging trends in a number of countries

and thus ascertain in what way the arrangements chosen in Europe differ from the North-American systems. Already trends peculiar to the European countries are emerging. A preliminary survey appears in this report, in the section devoted to cable television.

B. PROBLEMS COMMON TO VIDEO AND CABLE TV

Although having different requirements, video and cable TV do raise a number of common problems.

1. At the present stage in their development, one of the most urgent questions is the systematisation of research. There can be no communications policy without a proper study of the subject concerned. This is a prerequisite of which the authorities of the Council of Europe member states should perhaps be reminded by a formal recommendation.

The main objective of research is to detect the social needs which the new techniques will be required to satisfy. But attention will undoubtedly have to be paid as well to the ways in which these techniques are to be organised, financed and controlled - in short, to all the questions at present raised by video and cable TV.

Research should involve two complementary approaches:

- practical experimentation on the basis of pilot projects, with partial simulations;

- theoretical investigation with the help of various long-term forecasting methods (eg the Delphi method).

The experts stressed the former approach, which seemed to them more suitable for pinpointing social needs. Of course, such needs do not become apparent spontaneously, and future users of the new techniques are still unaware of the possibilities there will be. It is only through patient experimentation that it will be possible to obtain reliable information on new demands in the field of communications.

It was suggested that "social observatories" should be set up in order to follow at first hand the way in which the new techniques become integrated into the social context. But there are a number of conditions regarding methods of evaluation:

- First, the researcher's position should vary. The external observer should be supplemented by a participating observer who, by taking part in the experiment, is able to perceive some of its dimensions more clearly. A combination of these two approaches will provide the best guarantees for the relevance of the evaluation of experiments.

- Secondly, research teams should be multidisciplinary, so as to ensure that their members' points of view are complementary, thus enabling experiments to be assessed with greater discrimination.

- But only experiments of adequate duration can allow of such complex research: two years seems a minimum requirement. The development of experiments over a certain period can yield important information. That is why the different stages should be clearly distinguished.

In general, all significant experiments should be studied in depth. To promote such initiatives the Council of Europe should give, if not its material, then at least its moral support to some of them. It should commend them to the competent authorities in each country, and in commissioning expert reports it should give them wide publicity at international level.

The initial proposals could be made to the Council of Europe as soon as enough is known about the content of a number of experiments now being prepared in several countries (Belgium, France, Switzerland, Germany).

2. In the planning of experiments care should be taken to establish a close link between video and cable TV. It is already apparent that the greatest successes of local cable television are due to preparatory activities conducted with the help of video. Perhaps it could forthwith be made a fundamental rule that no cable television experiment should be launched without "pre-animation" by video.

Moreover, the organisational structures of video could in some cases be integrated into those of cable television. Thus the equipment and staff necessary for both techniques would be grouped together in the same framework.

3. Most of the experts convened by the Council of Europe would like video and cable TV to be managed on a pluralist basis by all interested parties in the communities they are intended to serve.

To that end traditional pluralism - which favours the biggest forces - should be expanded into a new, more differentiated pluralism which reflects more accurately social reality, where numerous minorities live side by side. Standards should be sought to guarantee in particular the presence of the less favoured sections of the population. Admittedly some people would regard their presence as "politically hazardous". But it is precisely in relation to the fringe of society that video and cable TV may well be able to make their greatest social contribution, because there more than anywhere else they can satisfy communication needs which are scarcely catered for, if indeed at all.

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4. The persons who will be working in the new structures deserve particular attention as far as their function is concerned.

As intermediaries between the techniques and their users they can regard their function as being either that of an "animateur" or that of a "facilitator".

- In the opinion of the British experts, the latter "helps groups to achieve a communication objective, without evaluating that objective". He regards himself first and foremost as a technical adviser. But he also assists in preparing the structure of messages so as "to make them more effective". Fundamentally, however, he should remain neutral as far as the contents of messages are concerned.

- On the other hand, the animator deliberately tries to influence the "communication objectives" of groups and individuals.

For video and cable TV it will probably be necessary to use the services of both types of intermediary simultaneously. There is no doubt, however, that the facilitator - who professes to be non-committed - can more easily be integrated into organisational structures of the pluralist type. Perhaps the very absence of personal commitment on the part of intermediaries is an important condition of the success of a pluralist experiment (of which the Swindon experiment in England is an example).

C. VIDEO: Towards a public service

The pluralist structure proposed for the new techniques should take the form of a public service open to any user and any use (1). Most of the experts were able to accept this important prerequisite, but only for video did they make practical, detailed recommendations. On cable TV it is premature to come to any specific conclusions.

The proposal for video is attached hereto. It arose out of a desire to define the new instrument as a genuine "public resource" access to which would be guaranteed by appropriate rules.

The concept of service implies at least two fundamental ideas:

1. A variety of uses to which the technical infrastructure may be put, according to the specific needs of users. From art video to educational video, via animation video, the range of possibilities is wide; none should be excluded out of hand.

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(1) Apart, of course, from commercial uses.

In short the multipurpose "video service" should be available to all who, in the words of a British expert, "have communications objectives which are not yet satisfied".

2. Balanced access for users, guaranteed both geographically and socially.

- Geographically: technical "resources" should be distributed more evenly among the different regions of a country. At present video projects are proliferating in large cities to the detriment of other localities. Decentralising video to rural areas and small towns seems all the more important as in future video will need to be able to fill the inevitable gaps in cable television networks. Cable TV will never be able to cover more than about 60% of a country. For technical as well as financial reasons it will be mainly concentrated in fairly large urban areas. Elsewhere, video centres (which might incorporate other "light" techniques) should be able to serve as functional substitutes.

- Socially: particular attention should be devoted to the potential role of video among the less favoured sections of the population. They should be granted some priority of access to video in order to make up for their greater deficiencies in the communication field.

Lastly it should be stressed that the new "resource services" should not be confined to video but should include other audio-visual media - photography, super 8, sound equipment, etc.

In this connection some experts recommended a more detailed study of the specific functions which sound can fulfil by comparison with visual media. Already a number of isolated experiments (the Montreal Sonograph, the Bristol experiment, the Grenoble Video Gazette) show that "audio" cassette or cable can play a part alongside video.

As proposed in the attached recommendation, video services contain all the elements capable of satisfying the five basic functions - production, storage, distribution, information and research.

The last three functions call for a special comment:

1. In information and research, special attention must be paid to the technical aspect of the production and distribution of video material. There are still many difficulties in these fields. The Council of Europe could encourage a search for solutions, for instance by sponsoring a number of technical studies and widely publicising them.

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2. There are several possibilities regarding distribution. First, there is the tape and cassette system, usable with groups and small communities. Then, in order to reach wider audiences it is possible to use cable and conventional television. But, as everyone knows, the "entry" of narrow-tape video into these two broadcasting media still raises considerable technical problems (cf above). Furthermore it will also be necessary to overcome the institutional resistance of the "major" television companies to video, an instrument of expression used by non-professionals.

A link between video and cable TV is particularly necessary for community television. That is why, from the structural point of view, it would be worth recommending the partial or complete integration of the two media. The whole, with the addition of other techniques, would at local level form an audio-visual resources centre allowing of a maximum number of different uses.

D. CABLE TELEVISION: GENERAL TRENDS

The experts considered general trends regarding the development of cable television in the various countries:

1. Passive cable TV, which merely relays existing programmes, is still the only form that is spreading to any real extent. Some examples suggest that it is a basic condition of the success of cable TV in general (NB: according to the KTK, a German committee of experts which recently reported passive cable TV is the only form that will meet real needs in the medium term).

But passive cable TV presents considerable problems: cultural problems, because of the importation of foreign programmes which compete with national ones (cf Belgium); economic problems, mainly because of the importation of advertising spots; and legal problems, because of the uncertainty regarding the rules governing copyright and associated rights, at both national and international level.

The experts expressed the hope that the Council of Europe would play a more active part in the legal field by arousing general awareness and, if possible, stimulating international co-operation. In this connection it was suggested that an approach be made to the Council's Legal Committee with a view to possible co-operation within the "Communication" project.

2. Inter-active cable TV, or two-way cable TV, has not yet provided any convincing evidence of its possibilities. The only successful experiments have been closely linked with very specific activities: those of the police, for example, or of other public services. No independent experiment has been successful.

At present there is some disagreement among specialists as to the desirability of continuing experiments with two-way cable television. Some regard it as an obsolete technology which does

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not justify the necessary investment: it is possible that in 20 years' time the use of non-metric waves will offer more interesting prospects than cable TV.

3. Active cable has also been disappointing. Experiments in local and community television in various countries are not making much progress. Some have been suspended, others are declining. For the most part they are labouring under serious handicaps: vague objectives, unreliable resources, nebulous structures.

Some observers now tend to believe that the "community" function of cable TV has little future. They claim that attention should be concentrated solely on other, more profitable functions under the generical heading of "tele-services". In part, these services resemble those provided by two-way cable TV, but they use "lighter", more simple equipment. Most are intended for commercial establishments.

However, for the purposes of cultural development, local and community schemes should be encouraged. In spite of the various disappointments, some experiments show that there is a real need for new forms of communication at local level. As J Halloran points out, this need is particularly obvious among the middle classes and the younger sections of the population. Undoubtedly cable television has extended participation in local and community life among these social categories.

More than once it has been shown that if local television is "taken away" it will soon be missed and the public will demand that the experiment be kept going. But every experiment requires sound structures. It is now clear that this lack of structures was partly responsible for the failure of some community schemes, even though they were well conducted (for instance, in Great Britain).

The debate on structures now going on in a number of countries is revealing a conveyance of views on the principles to be adopted for the future.

a. In the management of local cable TV, it will be necessary to separate the distribution function from the production function. That is why some advocate the introduction of a system based on the "common carrier" principle, which is being studied in the United States and should also be taken into consideration in Europe. A similar system has already been proposed in France, under the title of "réseau transparent" (transparent network).

b. In the management of production, the principle of pluralism should be aimed at. It alone can guarantee adequate "social control" of the activities of local television and help it to become an integral part of the community (cf page 4).

c. Regarding finance, many observers agree that money should come from various local sources. However they usually rule out revenue from advertising. Advertising has been accepted for some experiments, but it has become clear that, at least during the experimental period, local cable television does not attract many advertisers.

Some feel that it would be desirable to compel cable television distributors to contribute towards the financing of production. Their contribution would represent a certain redistribution of cable TV's commercial income for the benefit of cultural development. However, a financial contribution by cable television distributors would not give them any say in what was produced. This system is under discussion in the United States and should be closely studied in Europe. Another proposal is that the resources available for local cable television could be paid either into regional or local funds or into a national fund from which they would be redistributed according to various criteria to the different LCTVs. These funds would be managed collectively by those contributing towards them.

d. Lastly the development of the new forms of television should be closely watched, possibly by a special pluralist and multidisciplinary body of national stature, whose tasks would consist in:

- harmonising operational rules for local television services and supervising their application;
- commissioning research projects from qualified establishments in order to monitor the results of experiments;
- generally being an advisory and appeals body for all problems which may arise from day-to-day operation.

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PART II

I. Introduction

In February 1974 the government experts appointed to advise the Committee for Out-of-School Education and Cultural Development on the "Communication" part of its programme proposed the order in which activities should be carried out in 1974, 1975 and 1976 and specified their objectives. They emphasised that the Council of Europe should not aspire to offer "recipes" for the success of the new forms of television but should concern itself with "highlighting certain fundamental lessons learnt from investigations into audio-visual techniques in different countries". They also recommended that the Council assemble the necessary material for making a conspectus of the various national reports on cable TV and commission a series of studies on video as an instrument of animation and a technique paving the way for cable television.

After being adopted first by the Committee for Out-of-School Education and Cultural Development, then by the Council for Cultural Co-operation, this programme was implemented from March 1974 to October 1975. About 15 studies (listed in Appendix D) were commissioned by the Secretariat from audio-visual practitioners and theoreticians. Their overall purpose was to evaluate recent achievements in the field of cable television and videography and establish what remained to be done.

A meeting of experts was held in Paris on 22-24 October 1975 under the chairmanship of Mr Wangermée, Director of the "Communication" project. It was attended by the authors of most of the monographs and about a dozen international experts who had conducted experiments in cable television and video animation in various countries in Europe and elsewhere. Its purpose was to propose concerted action in these two fields and suggest further research, the final aim adopted by the CCC being to "foresee and assemble information that will be able to help governments work out their audio-visual communications policies".

II. Organisation of proceedings

The first day was devoted to videography, the second to cable television and the morning of the third to conclusions and future prospects. The conclusions of the first debate were embodied in a draft recommendation (cf. IV). Owing to lack of time it was not possible to do the same at the end of the debate on cable television, and it was left to the Secretariat to summarise the main points.

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III. Videography

During the debate leading to the recommendation on the setting up of public communication resource centres (cf. IV - draft recommendation), the following facts and ideas emerged:

It may be wondered whether videography meets any real needs or whether such needs as are voiced are merely the expression of minority groups. There is no doubt, in any event, that videography has ceased to be a hobby.

In France video has developed on the basis of urbanisation projects in the form of a group communication technique. Three types of use can be defined: first, video as a means of action, then video as a method of recording and analysing an event, and lastly video as a means of reporting on a situation or making propaganda. It has generally come to be regarded as reflecting a will to act on people rather than as an instrument for making them act.

In Germany its introduction into everyday life has come into conflict with the attitude of radio and television companies anxious to retain their monopoly.

In Switzerland video animation is mainly developing at cantonal level and in urban areas; it is in rural areas that groups are particularly anxious to obtain Federal Government support.

In the United Kingdom, government support for video is very compartmentalised, and it is unlikely that video can survive there without public support. Video is generally used for conveying a message. It is considered to be the result not of material development but of previous decisions by small groups, and it is wondered how industry can be persuaded to produce instruments matching the needs of animateurs.

In Belgium the national resource centre, a decentralised body initially confined to the lending of records, is to become a sort of national videograph possessing, in Brussels and the provinces, a pool of equipment, a video-tape library and a video research centre. A super 8 film production centre has also been set up in Belgium.

Video's applications cover a very wide range, extending from a social service to a new independent art form which should not be artificially isolated in any study of video; it should be emphasised that the video artist does not merely express himself but often refines video as a means of expression.

The video service is increasingly asserting itself in the face of the artificial dichotomy between the video process and video products.

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The various studies carried out this year clearly show that video groups and video activities develop best where a TV cable network already exists.

In the new range of audio-visual media, however, video is only an instrument which may be usefully employed in combination with Super-8, even though the latter calls for greater specialisation on the part of the user than does video.

The advantage of certain new techniques lies in the fact that they extend communication and transform it in terms of duration and the number of recipients. A crucial question to be considered, however, is: what social groups benefit most from the new techniques? Some experts also wonder whether the use of new techniques might not result in distracting people from their main concerns.

One of video's main assets is that it represents a new way of approaching television. Doubtless that is why its sponsors seek to promote it at the expense of photography, radio and the press, which nevertheless continue to play a much more important part in the lives of individuals.

But its use still raises many problems, not least the preparation and distribution of the end product and the scarcity and relative costliness of reproduction sets. It is justified however by the fact that in our societies it is impossible to reach the masses on an individual basis.

The broadcasting of videograms can be envisaged in the following ways:

- within a single group,
- among groups which have been united by a crisis (strike, damage to the environment etc),
- video activities geared to cable TV (broadcasting of videograms in a large housing estate or a district), experiments with "active" cable TV in some countries,
- broadcasting of videograms by conventional television.

The "publication" of videograms should be construed in a threefold sense: conceptual elaboration, structuring of a finished product and "tidying up" of material which will not necessarily be edited.

Strategies for the broadcasting of videograms should also be aimed at initiating established institutions (regional and municipal authorities, social agencies) in the use of this technique with a view to making them aware of its great communication potential.

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These strategies should also take into account the unique function of animateurs: Are they technicians responsible for maintaining the material and initiating others in its use? Or advisers on the production of effective videograms? Or agents of social change? Some regard these three functions as inseparable. Others prefer to separate them and lay emphasis on those where the animateur confines himself to the role of neutral "facilitator".

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At the end of the discussion the participants adopted the following text:

IV. Videography

On the basis of the suggestions made during discussion of the studies commissioned by the Council of Europe,

Desirous of proposing concrete measures likely to improve national communication policies,

The participants request the Council of Europe to:
Recommend that the states signatories to the Cultural Convention promote the creation of public communication resource centres at local level. While the legal structure of such centres would vary according to domestic legislation, they would be based on the following principles:

1. Objects

Their main object would be to provide the public with practical audio-visual media for individual or collective expressions (low-gauge video, Super-8, sound and recording reproduction techniques, photography). This would involve a number of inter-related services:

- production, reproduction, storage and distribution of audio-visual material;
- provision of information on the possibilities and advantages offered by the new media (video, Super-8);
- training in their use;
- promotion of research into their social and cultural uses;
- promotion of research into improved technology.

2. Equipment

To provide these services, each centre would require, for purposes of:

- production, an equipment pool (fixed and/or mobile) containing a variety of recording and editing equipment;
- presentation: "videotheatres" for group use;
- use by the public, on the spot or on loan, "videothèques" (videotape libraries) with individual viewing screens on a closed-circuit network, with catalogues kept regularly up-to-date;
- information on new techniques and training in their use, various facilities as appropriate.

3. Management

Organisation of the centres may vary according to the specific objects of each but they should be non-profit-making.

They should serve country areas as well as towns.

They should operate on the pluralistic principle of participative management and guarantee equal freedom of access to all users.

It is suggested that ownership of the technical equipment should be kept separate from its use for cultural purposes so as to guarantee the independence of users. To ensure that the system operates satisfactorily, users should, however, be required to observe a few basic rules.

A specially trained staff should also be available to help, as and when required, either with the production of audio-visual material or with social and cultural activities associated with its use.

V. Cable television

In some countries, one-way (or active) cable TV has become widely established. For instance, 30% of Belgium is now covered by cable TV. This is mainly due to the possibility of picking up foreign programmes. Nevertheless the favourite programmes are of the same type (viz fiction and light entertainment) and in the same language. In both Belgium and the United Kingdom the demands of artists whose works are broadcast might hamper this development in the absence of agreements between artists' associations and cable TV bodies on the payment of lump-sum fees to artists.

In the United States the desire not to slow down the spread of passive cable TV has led to a different legal situation. The USA has also launched a number of experiments in two-way (or interactive) cable TV, but, apart from those connected with specific activities, they have not been successful. The absence of criteria is no doubt the main cause. On the other hand, the schemes initiated in Japan are highly structured. They were planned over a long period and introduced on a large scale with the support of two ministries. They are to be assessed in 1977 and form part of a comprehensive communication policy that includes broadcasting via satellites and on radio.

In Canada it is planned for legal reasons to convert the major cable TV networks into two-way systems.

Even so, the results of experiments outside Europe are highly problematical, and it may be wondered whether two-way cable TV, which theoretically seems an ideal instrument for participation, will not rapidly become commercialised and prove of little value for communication.

In Sweden, the experiment at Kiruna in 1974 and early 1975 did on the whole produce fairly promising results which are enumerated in a booklet published in English.

In France experiments are planned at Rennes and at Lille-Dabo, a new town.

Some are also planned in the Netherlands in collaboration with Delft University. In that country, a decree published in 1971 lays down rules for experiments. They are subsidised by the state, planned to last two years and entail the setting up of representative cultural institutions to ensure that regional and local organisations are associated with the management of cable TV. They have to be accompanied by comparative sociological and methodological research (for example, Nimwegen University is studying the public response to cable television and Amsterdam University participation arrangements and management models). Advertising is banned; so is the free supply of equipment by firms. In the Netherlands parliament an integrated media policy is shortly to be proposed, but parliament is still unsure which cable system to select. These doubts seem all the more justified as the development of microwave broadcasting, now at the experimental stage in a number of countries, could make cable TV in its present form obsolete within about 20 years.

The Western world has always instinctively welcomed technical innovation, but in a period of economic recession it is questionable whether money should necessarily be spent on the development of a technological medium which by no means always increases communication between human beings in a society sated with information.

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Furthermore, technical inventions always take some time to exploit economically and bring under legislative control. This should temper the enthusiasm of supporters of the new technologies and perhaps prompt the carrying out of studies on the public's needs and aspirations. But identifying these is a difficult task, and the results are often very vague. Cultural needs can often be determined only by experiment. Experience seems in any case to have shown that the demand for participation television is less great than the demand for entertainment. There are various remedies for this. One is to inform the public, as is being done in the United States and Canada, about the exact nature of this type of television. Another is to simulate cable broadcasting, which automatically entails video animation. But the general lesson to be drawn from these considerations is that all current experiments should go on being studied closely, as even those which fail are of considerable interest.

This multidisciplinary research should be based on a number of principles:

- researchers should be able to play an active part in the field and even go beyond participative research;

- they should study the experiment in action, not merely "photograph" it;

- research should last a certain time (two years has often been regarded as the minimum period).

The various experiments in the Netherlands (Zoetermeer and Deventer), the United Kingdom (Swindon, Greenwich and Sheffield) and Sweden (Kiruna) have satisfied these requirements on the whole. At Milton Keyes, in the United Kingdom, cable television will mainly be used for the purposes of community development. The starting point for the experiment will be the needs and aspirations of the inhabitants of a new town which is expected to have a population of 250,000 in 20 years' time. It will be aimed in particular at meeting demand for information not satisfied by traditional or official means and make up for the lack of socio-cultural facilities. The experiment will be monitored from the outset.

The financing of experiments naturally raises complex problems which are not solved everywhere in the same way. Is advertising to be allowed? If so, what percentage of the budget will it cover? How can the interests of the local press in this field be reconciled with those of the cable TV companies and programme producers?

Experiments in active cable television have in any case revealed the existence of an audience mainly comprising representatives of the middle-class and young adults. Positive results are achieved when this type of television diverts its attention to other social groups as well. One of the priority questions is how to intensify participation by the less-favoured social groups.

Community television functions best where it has been preceded or is accompanied by video.

VI. Future programmes

A. Research

The Secretariat was asked to study with the Project Director to what extent, in the light of available funds, the following research projects (not classified in any order of priority) could be carried out in 1976 - and, if need be, in 1977 - with a view to amplifying the information at present available and paving the way for a further meeting of specialists.

1. National experiments and situations in Europe

Germany

a. The debate on cable television.

b. The Cassel experiment.

France

New experiments in video animation.

Italy

Experiments in local radio and television.

Regulations governing cable TV.

Netherlands

The Zaldbommel experiment in two-way television.

United Kingdom

Detailed study of the Milton Keyes experiment.

Switzerland

Experiments in video-animation in German- and Italian-speaking Switzerland.

Sion local television experiment (1976-77).

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2. Experiments and achievements outside Europe

Canada and USA

Steps taken to promote participation in community television (from practice to theory).

USA

Use of the common carrier.

3. Miscellaneous techniques or methods

- Experiments in active participation by the public in the preparation of television programmes ("open door");
- Audio-visual media and methods used by less-favoured groups to establish or improve communication with the public authorities;
- Educational functions of video and its use in out-of-school education;
- Video art;
- Use of sound in communication (sonographs);
- The press and the new media: indifference, hostility, co-operation.

4. Information and communication needs (Multiple and comparative enquiries into aspirations and significant experiments)

B. Pilot experiments

- Production of a videogram serving as a report on videography problems;
- Setting up of a European system to publicise, scientifically monitor, compare (in time and space) and evaluate (according to criteria to be chosen) a selection of experiments in videography and cable television.

C. Meetings

- It would be desirable to consider further the implementation of item 15(b) in the Parliamentary Assembly's Recommendation 748 (1975) on the role and management of national broadcasting;
- 1976 colloquy: It was considered that the topic proposed for the meeting, "Participation television and radio and the constitutional aspects of cable television", was not yet suitable for discussion. In a number of European countries (Austria, Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Germany,

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United Kingdom etc) commissions have been set up or Bills are being prepared or were only recently published. The topic will therefore be changed in agreement with the Project Director.

ANNEXE A
APPENDIX A

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A P P E N D I X B

AGENDA

General introduction:

1. Opening of the colloquy by a representative of the Secretariat.

2. Introduction to the discussion by the Project Director.

3. Adoption of the agenda.

I. PART ONE: VIDEO AND SUPER-8

1. Presentation of reports

- recapitulation by the authors of the main substance of their reports.

- information on new developments since the reports were written.

- suggestions for complementary studies in the relevant fields.

2. Discussion

2.1. Clarification of terminology and precise definition of the different types of video application. (This attempt at standardisation is necessary because of the terminological differences revealed in the reports. It might possibly result in a "video dictionary" containing the basic concepts with brief illustrations.)

2.2. Broad outlines of a video/Super-8 policy

2.2.1. List of institutions and authorities in the various countries concerned with video promotion. Their aims and resources. Possible forms of co-operation.

2.2.2. Consideration of the implications of a video policy: technical infrastructure, finance, organisation, co-ordination.

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2.2.2. (cont.) Examination of these factors along two basic lines of approach: 1. development of "institutional" video in the context of organised activity (eg. in new towns) and 2. support for "free" video (eg videographs).

2.2.3. Evaluation of social needs in connection with video/Super-8.

What point has research into video reached? The importance of this research to the formulation of an appropriate policy. The main lines of a research programme.

3. Resumé

Resumé of studies to be carried out in the fields referred to (on the basis of the discussion and of authors' suggestions).

II. PART TWO: CABLE TELEVISION

1. Presentation of reports

(cf. the "video and Super-8" section)

2. Discussion

2.1. Comparative assessment of individual experiments and projects under preparation in various European countries.
Institutional organisation: infrastructure, resources, programmes, decision-making bodies at different levels.
Public reactions: results of initial research into local television and two-way cables.

2.2. Consideration of possibilities for promoting sociological research
Principal research approaches. Organisation and financing.

2.3. Relationship between cable TV and other media
Assessment of trends in local and community radio in different countries. Projects in the pipeline in France. Account of early experiments in cable radio (eg Grenoble). Press attitudes to new techniques.

3. Resumé of the study proposals

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III. PART THREE: PROGRAMME OF COUNCIL OF EUROPE ACTIVITY

- Statement by the Secretariat representative.
- Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 748.
- Short and medium-term action.
- Pilot experiments and research projects.
- Publication of a further work.

A P P E N D I X C

COMMENTS ON THE AGENDA

I. PART ONE: VIDEO AND SUPER-8

1. PRESENTATION OF REPORTS

The reports can usefully be grouped according to their basic approaches:

a. A. Silbermann - "Videography in the Federal Republic of Germany"

An introductory investigation of the specific features and scope of video.

b. J. Hopkins - "Socio-cultural applications of television technology in the United Kingdom"

G. Milliard - "Freelance videoproduction in French speaking Switzerland"

P. Flichy - "Video groups and consensus video"

Case studies illustrating specific possible applications and raising various aspects of the problems of integrating video in the socio-political context.

c. J. Giusti - "Video as an instrument of community development in new towns"

H. Lhoest - "Video-animation in French-speaking Belgium"

The institutional organisation of video at two levels: national policy and sectoral policy (cultural life of new towns).

d. A. Hedlund - "The use of Super-8 film in Scandinavia"

The development of Super-8 film in relation to video.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1. Clarification of terminology

The reports reveal a wide variety of terms and concepts, some of which overlap, while some are mutually exclusive.

Without a standard terminology there can be no real discussion. An attempt should therefore be made, without over-simplifying an inherently complex and fluid subject, to agree on certain basic concepts. The reports seem to indicate that there are at least four main types of video action, although not defined in the same terms by all the authors:

- video for socio-cultural development (or action) purposes;
- video for creative purposes (especially artistic creation);
- video for educational (or teaching) purposes;
- video for research purposes.

A first attempt at clarification ought to involve reaching agreement on the exact scope of these terms. An inventory should then be drawn up of the various functions that can or should be served by each of these forms.

Finally, opportunities for inter-penetration between these forms and functions should be clarified.

The objectives and functions of cultural development video raise certain basic questions. Careful consideration should be given to concepts such as "community development", "social change" and "counter-culture". These terms are frequently used in the reports (as they are in any writing on socio-cultural development), but cover very vague concepts and lend themselves to contradictory interpretations.

Video for creative purpose and video for educational purposes have been excluded from most of the reports, but, as A. Silbermann shows, they have an important rôle to play in the general development of video.

Educational video, and especially video at school, should now be included in the work of the Group on New Techniques for Cultural Development. It is upon the audio-visual training (training by audio-visual means and training for audio-visual purposes) of today's children that the use of video by tomorrow's adults will depend.

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2.2 Broad outlines of a video/Super-8 policy

2.2.1-2 The various reports contain a number of basic ideas that converge towards a coherent set of suggestions. These suggestions should be spelled out more clearly in the discussion.

Video is an instrument for autonomous action in groups and communities, and for this reason usually tends to adopt a horizontal organisation structure. However, video is also a preparatory technique for cable television and as such attracts the attention of numerous official bodies, which seek to impose on it a vertical type of organisation.

As G Milliard points out, the ideal would be to achieve structures permitting transversal movement by way of both institutions and groups.

The establishment of such structures would entail a coherent, concerted policy, geared to the establishment of a "public service" system.

Along these lines, it has been proposed that the new techniques should be defined as genuine "public resources", to which general access should be guaranteed by means of appropriate rules (by law, as J Hopkins suggests).

The authors of several reports agree that this type of public infrastructure ought, for video, to consist of various factors:

- For production, a stock of material - fixed or mobile - including light and diversified equipment.

- For distribution, networks of decentralised, easily accessible video theatres.

- For reference and loan, video libraries linked up with rapid, diversified exchange networks, together with constantly updated catalogues. (Audio-visual messages will be transmitted by means of three parallel networks: a Herzian network, a cable network, and a lending network (1). In the short term, lending might well become more important than cable.)

- For information on new techniques and instruction in the use of these techniques, flexible machinery geared to needs.

(1) and sales network.

In certain countries, steps have been taken to establish such structures, for instance, in the form of "videographs" or "audio-visual centres" (sometimes extending to multi-media centres). Some of these centres set out to provide a full range of basic services: information, training, production facilities, diffusion, archives and distribution.

However, most of these projects are piecemeal and seldom fit in with others within a specific common framework. An overall policy should be defined in consultation with all the parties concerned: funders and potential users alike.

A number of reports stress the need for genuine cultural joint management (or federal management) in order to reconcile the various interests and to distribute the costs.

Such joint management should also facilitate better distribution of equipment between the various regions of each country. The current picture is a proliferation of video action in major urban centres, while the "provinces" remain under-privileged. Decentralisation of video towards rural areas and small towns (seems) all the more important because video should, in future, remedy the inevitable gaps in cable television networks. Cable will never be able to cover more than about 60% of each country. For technical and financial reasons, it will be concentrated mainly in major urban areas. In other areas, video centres (possibly incorporating other light techniques) should be able to serve as a functional substitute.

In the case of these Centres, the conditions of utilisation and access should be laid down by common agreement between the joint managers. These rules could be flexible enough to bridge the gulf between so-called "institutional" and "free" video.

It has been shown that video is seldom entirely "free", is independent of public or commercial organisations. It is usually linked by technical or financial bonds with "sponsors" exercising varying degrees of permissiveness.

In a "public service" structure, organised on a pluralist basis, ownership of the means can be made entirely separate from use, thereby guaranteeing considerable user independence. The users would, of course, have to abide by certain minimum rules essential for the smooth operation of the system.

2.2.3. Detailed studies should now be conducted on the specific features of video. It is known that video can make an important contribution in many fields, but the conditions for successful use have not yet been adequately ascertained.

Most projects so far have lacked specific objectives as well as adequate technical, financial and human resources. As in the case of cable television, an effort should be made to implement pilot projects watched closely using reliable methods of observation. Micro-media (video, Super-8 etc) research is as important as research into heavy techniques (cable, Herzian TV). Such research should reveal the conditions under which each system is more advantageous.

Any project for the advancement of light techniques should be coupled with a broad information campaign directed at political and socio-cultural leaders and at potential users.

Some of the reports made specific proposals along these lines, addressed to radio and television corporations.

These bodies should not only provide information on new techniques, but also give space, in their programmes, to some of the products of these new techniques. This is technically possible, and various experiments have shown that there is already a considerable demand. Detailed studies should be conducted on these experiments, for the information of all interested broadcasting corporations.

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II. PART TWO: CABLE TELEVISION

1. PRESENTATION OF REPORTS

a. Francis Balle: "Institutional aspects of television"

Raymond Ravar: "Cable: political options and socio-cultural implications in France, Great-Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands"

These reports take stock of general trends in cable TV. Inventory of institutional measures and investigation of political shortcomings.

b. James Halloran: "Communications and community" and "The development of cable television in the United Kingdom"

Peter Lewis: "Knowle West and Bristol Channel TV, a study of community programmes on a cable television network"

Initial survey of United Kingdom experiments in local television based on detailed case studies. Prospects and requirements for development of cable television in the United Kingdom.

c. International Broadcast Institute: "Advanced uses of cable systems"

Progress report on two-way cable experiments in the United States and Japan.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 General situation

All the reports emphasise the disillusionment that has set in after the initial wave of enthusiasm for cable TV. The experiments launched in various countries have hardly expanded, but are stagnating or even declining; some have been interrupted, and others have failed to get off the ground. Most of these experiments have been marred by serious failings: woolly objectives, unreliable resources, flimsy structures.

In some countries, the further development of cable television will depend on the findings of advisory bodies set up by the authorities to investigate the possibilities and requirements of new techniques (and sometimes traditional techniques as well). These bodies

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include the Annan Commission in the United Kingdom, the "Haut Conseil de l'Audio-visuel" in France, the "Kommission für den Ausbau des technischen Kommunikations systems (K.T.K.)" in Germany, and the "Groupe de Réflexion sur l'Audio-visuel" in Belgium.

Basically, these bodies are to present findings on three aspects of cable television:

1. financial arrangements and management of the technical infrastructure;

2. methods of utilisation;

3. production policies, bearing in mind the potential needs of the communities concerned (1).

On each of these points, interesting suggestions have been put forward in various reports by Council of Europe experts. These suggestions should be discussed and spelled out more clearly and in greater detail.

a. Finance

In the present economic context, the financing of cable TV is a major problem. As J Halloran has emphasised, the originality of cable TV lies in the great flexibility of possible financial arrangements. Taking advantage of this flexibility, an effort should be made to work out flexible patterns based on the principle of joint management. Experience seems to show that it is a mistake to finance cable TV from a single source whether it be public or private.

There is general agreement that a clear separation should be made between management of the technical infrastructure and its cultural and social utilisation, ie production.

This is why certain experts have recommended the introduction of a system based on the "common carrier" principle. This system is under study in the United States and deserves consideration in Europe. Coupled with suitable rules, it could help solve what seem today to be insurmountable problems (2).

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(1) In theory, these bodies have been instructed to study the whole range of opportunities for cable. Their main concern is, however, the establishment of local or even neighbourhood television.

(2) The Council of Europe could usefully commission a detailed study on this subject.

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b. Cultural utilisation

In this field, too, many observers suggest working in the direction of joint management, which is the only way of guaranteeing adequate "social control" of local television activities and helping to create adequate roots in the community. (The approach adopted in the United Kingdom with the Milton Keynes experiment is significant in this connection.)

When considering the rules governing the management of cable television - in technical, financial and cultural terms - special attention should be given to the contract systems. This system provides definite advantages, particularly in connection with advanced techniques. As Roger Errera has said, the contract, freely negociated between the parties within the framework of the law, is today the most flexible instrument governing the sharing responsibilities in a democratic society (1).

c. Programme content

Despite disappointments, it seems evident that certain experiments (particularly Swindon and Bristol in the United Kingdom, Kiruna in Sweden, and Grenoble in France) indicate the existence of a real need for new forms of communication at local level.

As J Halloran has emphasised, this need is expressed mainly among the youngest sectors of the adult population. Cable television seems to awaken in the young a new interest in local affairs. This is an important finding which - if it is borne out on a larger scale - may lead to increasing mobilisation of this sector of the population, upon which tomorrow's communications ultimately depend.

However, the initial findings of studies on needs are still at the stage of hypotheses. It is common knowledge that needs are not all expressed spontaneously but emerge in the course of patient community work over a period of years.

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(1) "The management of television in a democratic society". Symposium on the rôle and management of telecommunications in a democratic society, Council of Europe - Munich, June 1974.

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This community work must be part of a coherent policy of experimentation. It seems that, as F Balle points out, a new outlook in favour of the experimental approach is gaining ground among the decision-makers. Before tying down the future in hard and fast rules pilot projects are called for in order to work out realistic assessment criteria.

Experimenting does not mean leaving things to chance. J Halloran stresses that what is needed is systematic exploration according to carefully thought-out procedures.

Such exploration entails strict requirements, including:

- the setting of specific objectives;
- definite guarantees regarding resources;
- sufficient duration;
- basic structures providing a sufficiently broad community base;
- multidisciplinary methods of evaluation making possible carefully graded conclusions.

2.2. Communications research and policy

There should be no political decisions without prior research. This requirement is frequently voiced but seldom complied with. Even if research is available and provides important findings, it is not always taken into account by the decision-makers.

Specific recommendations could be made by the Council of Europe in this connection. These recommendations ought to include a broad outline of the main fields of research most urgently required, together with suggestions for the organisation and financing of such research. Certain studies conducted in the United Kingdom and France could already serve as pattern (cf J Halloran's study on Swindon).

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2.3. Relationship between cable TV and other media

Research on cable TV should undoubtedly also cover the traditional media. Local radio projects are springing up throughout Europe and the Press is becoming increasingly "local" in nature. It is therefore unrealistic to regard cable TV as an isolated phenomenon on an open market.

The Council of Europe has already included certain radio representatives in the Working Party on New Techniques. Should it not perhaps also call upon representatives of the Press?

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A P P E N D I X D

LIST OF

STUDIES ON CABLE AND VIDEO

Author	Title	Reference
1. Emile NOEL	New radio broadcasting techniques	CCC/DC (74) 102
2. Patrice FLICHY	Video groups and consensus video	CCC/DC (75) 33
3. I.B.I.	Advanced uses of cable systems	CCC/DC (75) 5
4. I.B.I.	Cable television outside Europe	CCC/DC (75) 29
5. Guy MILLIARD	Free-lance video production in French-speaking Switzerland	CCC/DC (75) 15
6. John HOPKINS	Socio-cultural applications of television technology in the U.K.	CCC/DC (75) 24
7. Arne HEDLUND	The use of Super-8 film in Scandinavia	CCC/DC (75) 34
8. Raymond RAVAR	Cable: political options and socio-cultural implications in France, Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands	CCC/DC (75) 27 + Addendum
9. Holde LHOEST	Video-animation in French-speaking Belgium	CCC/DC (75) 40
10. J.D. HALLORAN	Communication and community	CCC/DC (75) 46
11. Julien GIUSTI	Video as an instrument of community development in new towns	CCC/DC (75) 45
12. Alfons SILBERMANN	Videography in the Federal Republic of Germany	CCC/DC (75) 58
13. Peter LEWIS	Knowle West and Bristol Channel TV	CCC/DC (75) 35

Author	Title	Reference
14. J.D. HALLORAN	The development of cable TV in the U.K. - Problems and possibilities	CCC/DC (75) 57
15. Filippo de SANCTIS	La video libre en Italie	(In preparation)
16. Francis BALLE	Les aspects institutionnels de la TV - Etude exploratoire	CCC/DC (75) 67